

Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA)
Wolf Depredation Compensation and Financial Assistance Grant
Suggested Guidelines for Missing Livestock Claims
01/29/18

The following is a suggested guideline intended for Oregon County Wolf Advisory Committee's to review and use (at their discretion) when assessing claims for "missing livestock" due to suspected wolf depredation.

Livestock missing from wolf depredation is an issue primarily on public-land allotments and large leased or privately-owned pastures. These losses are most often during the summer and fall grazing season when there is limited human presence and producers are unable to find the wolf-killed or otherwise dead livestock due to topography or dense vegetation.

It is ODA's hope and intention that these suggested guidelines will not only assist county wolf committees in their evaluation of "missing livestock claims," but will also offer some consistency across the state as to how these claims are assessed and approved.

Applicable Oregon Administrative Rules

Pursuant to OAR 603-019-0020, grant funds received by a county program from the Department may only be used to compensate for missing livestock only when the animals in question became missing from within an area of known wolf activity, as designated by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), and the livestock owner or manager has satisfied the requirements described in OAR 603-019-0015.

Pursuant to OAR 603-019-0015(2)(d), "To qualify for compensation for missing livestock, producers must document that other possible causes for their animals to be missing, not including wolf depredation, have been eliminated for the number of missing animals they are claiming."

Also, the rule stipulates that compensation for missing livestock may be at a lower value than compensation for death or injury as allowed in 603-019-0015(2)(c).

Pursuant to OAR 603-019-0015(2)(e), the county advisory committee must also determine that the producer did not "unreasonably or purposefully create circumstances that attract wolves or encourage conflict between wolves and livestock or working dogs".

As mentioned in OAR 603-019-0020, in order to be compensated for missing livestock within an area of known wolf activity, the owner or manager must demonstrate to the county advisory committee that they have implemented best management practices to deter wolves, including reasonable use of nonlethal methods when practical.

Requirements

In summary, based on the above reference rules, producers must be able to demonstrate (to some degree) that the following four requirements have been met, in order to be considered for a compensable missing livestock claim by their county wolf advisory committee:

1. The missing livestock losses occurred within an area of known wolf activity (AKWA) as designated by ODFW;
2. That other possible causes for their missing livestock have been ruled out or eliminated;
3. The producer did not create circumstances that attract wolves or encourage conflict between wolves and livestock or working dogs;
4. The producer has implemented best management practices to deter wolves, including reasonable use of nonlethal methods when practical.

Suggested Ways to Satisfy Requirements

Requirement #1 - The producer must be able to demonstrate to the committee that the missing livestock losses occurred within an area of known wolf activity (AKWA) as designated by ODFW:

- Provide logistic information – Producer could be required to identify for the committee the location of missing animals on the most current version of the AKWA map as designated by ODFW. (For example, some allotments have large land masses that extend outside designated AKWA. The producer should be able to show evidence that would help the committee conclude that the missing livestock claims in question occurred within an AKWA.)
- Committee can visit with ODFW or USFWS biologist to confirm whether or not wolves were known to be in the part of the AKWA where livestock went missing during the time period they disappeared. Wolf radio-collar data may show the geographical areas that wolves were using at the time in question. Wolves do not use their pack areas equally across the year. Some AKWAs have one wolf, others have large packs increasing the risk of depredation. This information can be discussed with the state biologists.
- What allotments were used? Federal or private property?
- What time of the year were allotments used?
- Were the livestock “lawfully occupying” the allotment when lost? County wolf advisory committees may want to determine if livestock left on an allotment after the off date or put out before the on date, were lawfully present at the time in question and determine if such livestock would qualify for a missing claim?
- Inventory Control Requirements:
 - Require a form or Affidavit from producer showing third party verification of animal count upon release and upon gathering. (Example of Wallowa Co. Affidavit attached);
 - How were animals released? (Out-of-gate or hauled/trucked in?)
 - Require specific record keeping showing system of movement - number of animals placed at what allotment at what times of the year and any movement of these animals or presumed losses. (See example of Wallowa Pasture Data Sheet)

Requirement #2 - The producer must be able to rule out or eliminate other possible causes for their missing livestock:

- As mentioned above - provide records showing difference in count released vs count when gathered;
- Require and review the individual livestock producer's normal/historical percentage of loss records for the particular allotment or pasture where missing livestock are claimed to determine number of loss above normal;
- Require producers to report all missing livestock to local ODA Livestock Brand Inspector in a timely fashion (inspector will complete a one-page report. Committee can request a review of data for a specific timeframe from ODA);
- Provide data or records to committee in order to rule out or eliminate other causes of missing livestock (adverse weather, accidents, disease, poisonous plants, theft, other predators, etc.)
 - Were pregnancy tests conducted? How many pregnant animals released into the allotment – expected calf count? Review of Vet. pregnancy test bill or other documentation? Account for expected calf losses from birthing complications that are normal when livestock is unattended during the birthing process.
 - Any diseases, tests conducted, results/outcomes – (i.e., deaths, lower birthing rates, etc.)
 - Changes in herd management or stocking rates (e.g., putting out at a different time, steers vs pairs, etc.).
 - Review of adverse weather conditions for the period in question;
 - Review of other dangers in the pasture (e.g., poisonous plants can be a bigger problem in some years based on how much rainfall there is or when livestock are on certain pastures.)
 - Any history of theft in area (Committee can check with local law enforcement or ODA Animal Health/Livestock Program). Lack of carcasses and bones could be an indicator of theft, in areas where they should be visible on the landscape. This doesn't apply in thick forests.
 - Livestock age – natural causes of death are common in older animals
 - History of other predators in the area? (Committee can check with USDA Wildlife Services, ODFW, or other related government or livestock officials to learn historical predator issues in the particular pasture or general area)
 - Evidence of wolf presence at suspected area of AKWA during suspected date livestock went missing:
 - Tracks, scat, reported sighting data from ODFW or other governmental or private parties;
 - VHF or GPS collar data from ODFW supporting wolf presence in this area of the AKWA;

Requirement #3 - The committee must determine that the producer did not create circumstances that attract wolves or encourage conflict between wolves and livestock or working dogs.”

- Sign affidavit (or application form) that no livestock are dumped or piled in pastures or allotments.

- Wolves are scavengers and are attracted to dead livestock. Provide records showing carcasses that were removed, buried or protected (fenced) to reduce attractants. Not all carcasses can be removed, but producer should focus on ones that are near livestock watering areas, salts or nighttime bed grounds.
- Do not place livestock at den site or pup rendezvous locations if known.
- Producer should reduce use of herding or livestock protection dogs in close proximity to wolves at a den, pup rendezvous, or kill site. Wolves are territorial and a working dog near a den encourages conflict as they may consider the dogs to be a threat to their pups.

Requirement #4 - To be eligible for a missing livestock claim, the producer must demonstrate to the county committee that he/she has implemented best management practices to deter wolves, including reasonable non-lethal methods and practices.

- Producer to provide committee evidence of:
 - Calving/lambing prior to moving livestock to large pastures or allotments.
 - Reducing Attractants – Bone pile removal, carcass disposal sites;
 - Barriers – Permanent fencing, temporary fladry, electrified fladry, electromesh fencing, solar chargers;
 - Human Presence – Range Riders, Herders or other guarding. To be considered a non-lethal measure the human presence should be actions reasonably expected to reduce depredation under the circumstances. So driving a truck or ATV on roads during the day, may not be expected to deter conflict, but camping out near livestock after they have been moved to a new pasture and livestock are not paired up would qualify;
 - Livestock Protection Dogs and Other Guarding Animals;
 - Alarm or Scare Devices – Radio-Activated-Guard (RAG) Device, other light and sound making devices;
 - Documented hazing or harassment of wolves
 - Livestock Management/Husbandry Changes
 - Changing pastures to avoid conflict with wolves,
 - Reduced calving period,
 - Birthing earlier so calves are larger when put out,
 - Waiting to put out on pasture until wild ungulates have their young,
 - Stockmanship/Herd Structure – Keep livestock congregated together and less susceptible to being singled out;
 - Experimental Practices coordinated with ODFW or USFWS– Bio-fencing, bellling cattle.

Note: It is also suggested that county wolf advisory committees create some type of process or mechanism for recipients of missing livestock claims to notify the committee whenever animals that were compensated as missing, might show back up after weeks or months of being missing, at which time an appropriate refund should take place.